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NEWS RELEASE



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Utah's courts are committed to open, fair, and independent justice.

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COURT OF APPEALS MARKS TWENTY YEARS

Four of original seven judges remain on the bench

Salt Lake City, UT---The Utah Court of Appeals will mark 20 years of operation on February 3, 2007. The Court of Appeals was created to reduce appellate delay. In 1987, when the Court of Appeals began hearing cases, the Utah Supreme Court had a backlog of about 1,000 cases. About 500 of these cases were transferred to the Court of Appeals for disposition.

The Court of Appeals hears all appeals from Juvenile Court along with appeals from District Court that involve domestic relations (divorce, annulment, property division, child custody, support, visitation, adoption and paternity), and criminal matters of less than a first degree. The Court of Appeals also reviews appeals of administrative proceedings by state agencies and hears cases transferred by the Utah Supreme Court. To date, the Court of Appeals has disposed of 15,198 appeals.

Law prohibits all seven members of the Court of Appeals from sitting on the bench at once, therefore the court sits and renders judgment on rotating panels of three judges. Though the Court of Appeals conducts sessions at the Matheson Courthouse, it also travels several times throughout the year to different regions of the state to allow the public an opportunity to learn more about the court.

Four of the original Court of Appeals judges remain on the bench. They are: Judge Russell W. Bench, Judge Judith M. Billings, Judge Pamela T. Greenwood, and Judge Gregory K. Orme. Judge James Z. Davis joined the court in Nov. 1993, Judge William A. Thorne, Jr. in May 2000, and Judge Carolyn McHugh in Aug. 2005.

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Court of Appeals Timeline

- 1984 -Utah citizens approve a revision of Judicial Article VIII of the Utah Constitution.
 -Governor Norman H. Bangerter appoints a task force on the judicial article to identify problems facing the judiciary and to recommend solutions. Task force identifies two of the problems being burden of appellate delay and lack of multi-judge review of circuit court decisions.
 -The task force recommends creation of a Court of Appeals.
 -Utah becomes the 37th state to create an intermediation appellate court.
- 1985 -Revision of Judicial Article is enacted.
- 1986 -Nominating Commission, chaired by Chief Justice Gordon Hall, interviews 45 applicants and forwards 21 names to the Governor's office. Other commission members include Aileen Clyde, Jess Agraz, Roy Simmons, and Julie Barrett.
- January 17, 1987 -Seven judges are appointed by Gov. Norm Bangerter. Three are sitting judges and three are attorneys from private practice: Russell Bench-Utah Supreme Court staff attorney; Third District Court Judge Judith Billings; Seventh District Judge Richard Davidson; Third District Juvenile Judge Regnal Garff; Pamela T. Greenwood-general counsel, First Interstate Bank; Norman Jackson-senior partner, Jackson, McIff & Mower; Gregory Orme-partner, VanCott, Bagley, Cornwall & McCarthy.
 Each judge initially had one law clerk and wrote six opinions a month.
- January 28, 1987 Court's first hearing is conducted.
- February 3, 1987 Court officially opens doors at the Midtown Office Plaza, 230 South 500 East.**
- March 1987 First oral argument calendar heard.
- January 1998 Appellate Mediation Office is formed.
- Spring 1998 Court of Appeals moves to the fifth floor of the Scott M. Matheson Courthouse.
- January 19, 2006 First panel of all women judges hears oral arguments.

Firsts

- First case docketed in the Court of Appeals was Carr v. Enoch Smith Company.
- First memorandum decision was Midvag v. Dept. of Employment Security.
- First full opinion issued by the court was Copper State Thrift & Loan v. Bruno, written by Judge Judith Billings.

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